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Master Secret

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The Master Secret

BY

ALBERT BOYNTON STORMS

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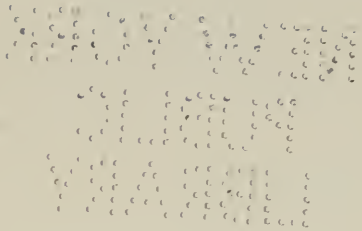

Foreword

If the Christian revelation had no other consequence than to impress us that in the sight of Heaven all that is essentially human is infinitely precious, that result alone would leave the Christian religion of inestimable value to the world.

Could any teaching be more explicit than the teaching of Jesus upon this matter? "The very hairs of your head are numbered. Fear not, ye are of more value than many sparrows," and "not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God." Jesus took a "little child and set him in the midst" of His disciples, and from the child taught at once the simplest and the deepest truth—the ultimate worth in the sight of God of unspoiled human trust and human love. Humanity becomes skeptical as to its own worthfulness, and cynical and cruel. Jesus brings us back to an appreciation of the value of whatever is essentially human. In contrast with the cynical indifference with which pharisaical hardness

of heart looked upon a "woman that was a sinner," Jesus with chivalrous courtesy and delicacy lifted into esteem for evermore the value of a person. Humanity can never forget His word, "Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more."

The watchword of humanity in its progress towards the light of a new day is taken from the lips of Jesus, "Ye are of . . . value."

There is no argument for the greatness of man like the fact of the greatness of his need. The humblest of men, kicked and buffeted by his fellows and by his fate, little esteemed, and finding it difficult to lift his head in self-respect, nevertheless needs for the satisfaction of his life, truth and immortality, love and God. His need has imperial proportions. Nothing less than Heaven and divinity can appease his hunger of soul. No values less than eternal can satisfy him.

Some years in the ministry and other years in contact with student life in college work have led me through an increasingly sympathetic study of the "problem of human life" to appreciate the incomparable

value of the method of the Master in discovering the values of life.

In part the thoughts contained in these pages have found expression in college chapel talks and in the pulpit of Central Avenue Church. The reception they have there received leads me to hope that they may find an equally generous and kindly reception by the larger audience to which they are now addressed.

One chapter, "An Ancient Psalm of Life," takes up an Old Testament character and a psalm as showing the fundamental harmony between the old and new dispensations.

The chapter on "Christianity and the Supernatural" is republished by permission from the *Methodist Review*.

ALBERT BOYNTON STORMS.

Central Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, Ind.

The Master Secret

The Master Secret

"All alone—alone,

. . . . . .

God shall speak to thee out of the sky.

. . . . . .

The years will bring us hastening to their goal,
A little more of calmness, and of trust,
With still the old, old doubt of death and dust,
And still the expectancy within the soul.
O Father, as we go to meet the years,
We ask not joy that fame or pleasure brings,
But some calm knowledge of the sum of things—
A hint of glory glimmering over tears;
That he, who walks with sanction from Thy hand
Some token of its presence may have seen,
Beneath which we may tread the path serene
Into the stillness of the unknown land." (SILL.)

"I have trodden the winepress alone."—*Isaiah 63: 3.*

THIS is the cry of a soul that reaches us out of the far past. "I have trodden the wine press alone." The cry has in it the pathos of a great sorrow, and strikes the

deepest chord in the human heart. A human voice, rich and resonant, may awaken sympathetic response from the chords of a harp, thus creating its own accompaniment. And so the appeal of a noble grief is profound and universal.

It is one of the paradoxes of life that Sorrow, which we treat as an enemy, from which we shrink, and which we seek to banish, counting ourselves happy only when Sorrow is absent—that unwelcome Sorrow is yet the angel that opens the heart to life's most precious treasures.

The memory of a great sorrow is cherished.

The literature that is immortal strikes this deep note. Priam's grief as sung by Homer, David's lament for his son, Rizpah's sleepless vigilance as she frightened away the beasts of prey in the night and the vultures by day in her lonely watch upon the rock of Gilboa, where her sons hung in judicial expiation for the sins of Saul; Job's soul-cry in the anguish of uncertainty as to the goodness of God, never lose the power of their appeal to the human heart. It is the appeal of Sorrow. "Deep calleth unto deep."

The vision recorded in Isaiah is set in the time of the captivity. No people ever identified themselves with the ideals and the future of their nation more absolutely than the Hebrews. That the citizen existed for the State was a familiar and a commanding idea among the ancients. The Greek found his personal worthfulness, his individual definition, in his citizenship. Apart from his city or his State he would have lost significance. He lived for the State. There was an elegance, a splendor about Greek patriotism that has never been equaled elsewhere. The Roman, too, with his stoical devotion to the State as the embodiment of law and authority, developed a patriotism not unlike that of the modern Japanese. Patriotism thus becomes a kind of stern religion. The individual counts not his life dear unto himself if its sacrifice will add to the glory of the State or help to maintain and to vindicate the political ideals of his State. Modern Western peoples have developed a similar passionate patriotism for the State as the expression of the ideals of liberty.

The Hebrews, the race chosen to bring to humanity its noblest religious ideas,

the race with a genius for God, conceived the State as a theocracy. Jehovah was their super-sovereign. And Jehovah had a great purpose to be achieved through His chosen people. The humblest Hebrew shared in the glory of the divine purpose. Through this people God was to shine upon the nations. Inevitably they came to identify the national life, the stability and power of their government with the integrity and strength of the divine purpose. To them it was incredible that their nation should not be preserved. Their prophets had one supreme and never-ending task—it was to hold this people to humility of spirit and to their religious ideals. The tendency was strong to become fanatically over-confident, nationally selfish, politically arrogant, and religiously as intolerant as superficial.

When the Hebrew nation was humiliated before the nations and left crushed and bleeding in the dust, her great prophets saw in this the discipline of Jehovah. The ideals of the Hebrews should not perish. The nation should be purged and purified. A "remnant" should carry forward the divine purpose. The prophets had the

saving salt of "idealism." They conceived the nation vividly as a person, as a "suffering servant of Jehovah."

There then arose before Israel's great prophet the sublimest ideal vision that ever filled the soul of a seer with divine afflatus. Out of the bruised nation there arises before his vision One whose "face was so marred, more than the face of any man," that men were "astonied" at Him. They "esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." And it seemed as though He should be "cut off" with none left to perpetuate Him or "to declare His generation." Yet a more marvelous conception supersedes this, of One "despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: and as One from whom men hide their faces." The piteous and repulsive and even hideous becomes glorious in beauty and power.

A new truth is coming to view. This Silent Sufferer, who "as a sheep before his shearers is dumb," opening not His mouth, has saving power. It pleased the Lord to "bruise Him," to "put Him to grief." Out of this deep humiliation shall spring an immortal power that shall make the kings

of the earth "shut their mouths" before Him in awe. "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. . . . He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." This one shall indeed "divide" a "portion with the great, and the spoil with the strong."*

So the vision in the sixty-third of Isaiah is of one that cometh from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah. Out from the South the prophet sees a Deliverer coming, not with an army, but *alone.* From the ruins of Jerusalem with desolated temple and cruel humiliation the seer beholds a Redeemer approaching, swaying forward not as one who staggers in weakness, but as one who is invincible in power.

And the One is heard to say, "I have trodden the wine press alone."

There is here not alone the boast of

* Isaiah 53.

single-handed victory, but the cry of a great and noble sorrow. This MAN of the prophet's vision has entered the *Great Solitude* where the soul must meet Duty and Destiny and God alone.

The noblest of the redmen used to send their youth singly and alone into the solitudes and the silences, there for days and nights to remain silent under the stars that they might become aware of the Great Spirit and of their own souls.

It would be well if, far more than we do, we, too, could send our youth into the solitude and the silence. In the desire for seclusion, often interpreted as moodiness of young people as they come face to face with the great change from youth to maturity, in facing the mystery of life, there should be opportunity for self-knowledge, self-reverence, and self-mastery.

The secret that lies deeply in the *Method of the Master* is the secret of reverence for one's own soul, and reverence for God. Out of these reverences springs the complementary reverence for other people's souls. All hopeful and sound social philosophy must take up this principle of reverence for the person. And it is in the

Sinaitic solitudes and silences that men grow reverent and independent and sufficient. Only as men become aware of God and of their own souls can they stand upon their own feet and hear intelligently the voice of the Lord.

We hear much to-day about socializing industry, about the social state, and about the social significance of Christianity.

As a recognition of the diffusion of the Spirit of Christianity and of the increasing complexity of the industrial, economic, and political relations of the age, this has significance. But there is the greater need of grasping the truth that life is essentially individual.

All social relationships, however important, are yet superficial compared with the soul's own individuality. Individualism is the deepest philosophy of life. Individualists we must all be or become flotsam and jetsam. The social powers of men lie in the fact that as individuals they stand independent and above mere relationships and can both criticise and control them. Socialism, in the sense of an absolute principle, is self-destructive. Society can be Christian and enduring only as its

members become independent and intelligent enough to make society Christian, through the adoption of the spirit of social service; not by reversing the process and expecting to make men Christian by socializing industry and by the aid of social institutions. However much value may be attached to wholesome environment, environment can not create anything—it can only offer favorable soil in which living seed may spring to fruitage. A spiritual desert will never produce the fruits of righteousness, however much it may be tilled and watered.

We need to come back to the everlasting truth that the Soul and God alone stand sure.

It would be well if we could restore the significance of individual conversion as the initiation of individual religious life.

The outward accompaniments, visible phenomena, the tragic experiences are not essential. We could no more restore the camp-meeting of one hundred years ago, with its "bodily exercises," which in themselves profited little, than the rude social customs of the frontier.

But when the deep seriousness of the

soul's personal approach to God was lost or dimmed, spiritual life began to lose its definite and distinctive character. A socialized Christianity tends to vagueness. The profound personal conviction of relationship with God is blurred. Religion becomes a mild altruism, good-natured, but lacking both in clearness of vision and strength of conviction.

The mere seeking of the external aspects of intense spiritual experiences may become in the highest degree artificial, a sort of pretense, a play. But the bleaching of religion out into commonplace morality and mere decency of living is to rob religion of any deep significance or compelling power and to blur the eternal issues of life. As a matter of conventions merely, the tendency to sag is irresistible.

Religion may of necessity find its expression in social service, but yet social service is not religion. Religion is the soul's conscious response to the Spirit and the Will of God. The soul must stand solitary before God to become self-conscious.

After all has been said that may be said about the social significance of Christian-

ity, it still remains true that Jesus selected a few individual men and sent them forth with the leaven of the Kingdom in their souls. This was and is the *Method of the Master.*

And God's method of forging great souls is the Master Secret of humanity.

After the most diligent industry has dug up and sifted out all that may be found in the heredity and environment of a great man, the Master Secret still lies there in the solitude of his own soul. How he met the world and duty and God, and what became the master motive of his life, that is the master secret.

The transcendent interest of the Gospels lies in this, that they contain a marvelous revelation of the soul of Christ. Biographies in the ordinary sense the Gospels are not. In the deeper sense, as a revelation of the soul of their subject, the Gospels are unequaled.

The Gospels afford a glimpse into the holy of holies of the Virgin's soul. It seems to me all discussion of the virgin birth, as though this question could be raised and considered in cold blood, as any piece of historical criticism, borders upon profanity

and misses something essential, as life itself in the research of the biologists. Into the holy mystery of the soul of Mary we are permitted to look. Reverence alone becomes us.

Around the Bethlehem manger-cradle and in the temple are groups of devout souls that have vision for the glory of God. At the age of twelve Jesus in the temple utters a most significant word, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" Nothing more until His public ministry. A mass of detail that would fill volumes might have been given to fill these blank intervening pages and have served only to confuse the signally significant thing, the deep-lying motive, the soul-secret, the true character of the individuality of Jesus.

Let us come near here, in deepest reverence, to the power of motherhood in forging the soul of the child. Mary's maternal prayer has been treasured. Out of the spiritual passion of her race she voices the Magnificat. The spirit of prophecy breathes through her. And in that atmosphere Jesus came.

Again at the baptism, and in the temp-

tation, a soul-secret is revealed. The attitude of Jesus towards the Father's will, and His attitude towards the subtle temptations to world mastery by the methods of the world, make His inner life as an open book.

So also the prayers of Jesus treasured for us as they were graven upon the minds of His disciples who heard Him as He prayed, or to whom He told the prayers that were forged in His soul in the storm and stress of His sorrow—the prayers of Jesus given in the most generous and sacred and divine confidence—constitute a soul-revelation nowhere equaled.

So, too, the words from the Cross are a revelation.

And this is the method of God—the Master Secret of humanity that out of the disciple of solitude the soul shall come with the beauty and strength of God. For every soul must become like Christ. Every soul must become a savior. Merely to endure sorrow or temptation is not enough. The use we make of life is the main thing. We, too, must march breast-forward as Jesus did. We, too, must know His baptism.

Our personal sorrows are unbearable because we meet them pettily and selfishly. Out from every great sorrow, and our deepest experiences are inseparably linked with sorrow, we should come as Jesus did, with faces chastened but smitten with the light of eternal day. We have no right to pass through any deep experience and come forth less than when we entered upon it. Not to crush and bruise and weaken, but to strengthen and ennoble us, is the discipline of life given. "The bruised reed He will not break and the smoking flax He will not quench."

It is a sin to meet sorrow and not be made better by its touch. The strength of God is promised, not merely that we may somehow endure, but that we may be "more than conquerors." We have the right to pray, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." But the prayer can not be answered unless our faces are lifted to the skies. "All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that are exercised thereby."

And this is the method of God, the master secret of humanity.

"Then welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids not sit nor stand, but go;
Be our joys three parts pain;
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge
the throe."

The inner secret of a great life is always of fascinating interest. It will never cease to be of profound interest to seek an answer to the question, "How did Lincoln come to be?"

Here, too, we are given a glimpse into soul secrets. He lost his mother when he was but nine years old, but her influence was ineffaceable. She seems to have been much above the average of her associates in intelligence and native refinement. But the hardships of a pioneer life crushed out her life. This early bereavement left its mark upon Lincoln. In his early manhood he loved with all the chivalrous devotion of his nature Ann Rutledge, who sickened and died under circumstances most pathetic. Lincoln spent with her the last hour of her consciousness. She then relapsed in her brain fever into coma, and Lincoln went out into the midnight of

a great grief that for months threatened to unsettle his reason. Biographers have in general made but slight reference to the deeply personal experiences of Lincoln. Yet these great sorrows, followed by a life of continuous disappointments, culminating in the taking into his own soul a nation's woe, produced the Lincoln whom we know. Out of deep sorrow the MAN came. His character was forged in the storm and stress of the elemental forces that have made great souls in all ages. He, too, could say, "I have trodden the wine press alone."

We do not know how diamonds are made. Nature guards her secret well. We know that diamonds do not rot. As you hold the precious stone in your hand, "hither and thither turning it to see the rich light play in its mysterious depths," you marvel as to the Master Secret by which carbon is turned into splendor of light.

And so we marvel at the transfiguration of personality into divine beauty and power. But here the secret is not so jealously guarded. God gives us glimpses into the souls of men as He has into the

soul of His Son. It is not in maydays of transient delight that greatness of soul is achieved, but in the storm and stress—in the solitudes—in the awful silence. No life is strong that merely flits in the sunbeams of summer days. Often God will not let us be so silly and trifling and superficial as we wish. The waters come in upon our souls. Out of the deeps we cry to God. And He hears our cry, not merely to lift us out of the waters into which we are sinking through unbelief, but to make us forever nobler and mightier for that lift of the Divine Hand.

"There are (those) who hold life like a precious
stone,
Hither and thither turning it to see
The rich light play in its mysterious depths;
And other men to whom life seems a bridge
By which they pass to things which lie beyond;
And others, still, who count life but as wine,
In which they drink their pledges to their friends.
But then there are to whom life's dearness lies
In that it is the pressure of God's hand,
With which He holds our feeble hand in love,
And makes us know ourselves in knowing Him."*

* Extract from note-book of Phillips Brooks.—*Life of Brooks*, Allen. Vol. II, p. 366.

The Master Motive

"Then said I, Lo, I am come;
In the roll of the book it is written of me:
I delight to do Thy will, O my God;
Yea, Thy law is within my heart."
—*Psalms 40: 7-8.**

JESUS was a revolutionist. He came to establish a new order. He was a constructive revolutionist, and a constructive revolutionist is a true evolutionist. In evolution the husks are thrown off. The vitality of the seed is conserved, not destroyed. The expansion of a vital principle creates the superficial impression of ruin; but it is destruction that there may be construction; it is death that there may be life; it is the birth pain of joy.

The Old Testament and the old dispensation contained seed. These men of vision saw fundamental issues and grasped principles.

The conception that lies back of this fortieth psalm is noble. Here is a per-

* Also Hebrews 10

sonality with penetrating vision who sees the profound purpose of God in the religious sacrifices which He has ordained, but who also sees that God's purpose can not be fulfilled by mere sacrifices. As a servant of God, this man finds his noble destiny to be the bringing of his own life up to the living service of God.

"Many, O Lord my God, are the wonderful works
which Thou hast done,
And Thy thoughts which are to us-ward;
They can not be set in order unto Thee;
If I would declare and speak of them,
They are more than can be numbered.
Sacrifice and offering Thou hast no delight in;
Mine eyes hast Thou opened;
Burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required.
Then said I, Lo, I am come;
In the roll of the book it is written of me:
I delight to do Thy will, O my God;
Yea, Thy law is within my heart."

—*Psalms 40: 5-8.*

And this firm grasp of divine purpose is carried forward in the New Testament and applied to the Savior. He is represented as taking up this great prayer and presenting His own life with all its depths of purpose as a sacrifice to God.

Jesus came to lift into power the new law. The principle of His life was not justice, but love. He did not come to teach men to stand stoutly for their rights and for the "square deal." He taught and illustrated a sort of noble contempt for mere petty personal rights and prerogatives.

"Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away."

What of it, He seems to say, and the message gains compelling significance in the light of His own life—what of it, if men do impose upon you in the things of petty ambition. Be nobly improvident here. You have infinitely nobler business than to be greatly concerned about your coat or cloak. The Master Motive lies deeper. Neither can you afford to suffer loss of energy and influence and to become be-

meaned by squabbling with rude impertinence. If one strike thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

Soldiers engaged in an urgent campaign, explorers seeking the pole, hunters on the chase; nay, better still, statesmen who have grasped commanding ideals, apostles with a burning message, souls with a destiny to fulfill, can afford to discard impedimenta.

A great purpose, a mighty motive makes men apparently reckless of lesser things. They "press towards the prize of a high calling."

Thus the Master Secret of Jesus becomes His Master Motive. Here as elsewhere the centrally great in principle becomes the duty of men. The humblest become possessors of the greatest. Life's eternal values are not reserved for the great of this world. God has revealed them unto babes. The Master Motive is his who loves. God prizes the simple, sincere life that is willing to accept the great law. Jesus was not a cynical Diogenes carrying a lantern by daylight looking for "a man." Jesus searched the souls of men

for capacity of sympathy with the master passion of His own life, and found such capacity.

Into this great and Master Motive He inducted men who were willing. And He has forever been doing so. The company of souls thus linked to Him through the brief centuries is indeed a "noble company." The power of the Master Motive grows.

But let us see the nature of this Master Motive.

Jesus, as has been said, was a constructive revolutionist, a true evolutionist. He treated the "law" with profound respect. He evaluated the past and the treasures of tradition infinitely better than the official custodians of law and religion. He grasped the principles that lay imbedded in law and tradition and set these principles free.

Now, in the treatment of the Hebrew laws by Jesus there is an attitude that should greatly interest us in this age of science when the spirit and the method of science impel us to look into the nature of things for their inherent law or principle.

Jesus saw the ultimate significance of

God's unwritten law as treasured by the Hebrew faith. That law reached back to and served as an educational discipline for the elemental forces that inhere in human nature.

Take, for example, His treatment of marriage. Here is an elemental instinct. Man shares it with the animals. Jesus recognizes and respects this mating instinct. He said, "He which made them from the beginning made them male and female." God the Creator and Father is recognized in the natural law. Complementary to this natural law is the religious law of marriage which makes this relationship the holiest and most binding of social bonds.

The Hebrews gave women a social and legal status in advance of the customs of their age. Wives could not be "put away" without legal procedure and bills of divorcement. But, even so, Jesus declared that such "putting away" was a failure of the social purpose in God's law. He holds up to men the ideal of marriage that is forever perfect, because it grasps the ultimate spirit and purpose of God in the natural and religious institution of mar-

riage. Always and ever as man and woman under Christian auspices stand at the marriage altar, the relationship established is hallowed by the authoritative ideals of Jesus. His is the ultimate truth about this as about every other fundamental fact and relation.

So also is His treatment of prayer and of almsgiving and of Sabbath observance. He grasped principles. His words were spirit and life. His was the work of a constructive revolutionist.

And now, in regard to the most fundamental of all principles, the Master Motive of life, He speaks with ultimate authority.

The disciples, in their personal jealousies and ambitions, furnish the occasion for His teaching.

The desire for mastery is an elemental passion. It has its use like every other instinct. In the brute it will be very "brutal." In brutal men it will be worse than brutal. No brute can be so brutal as a brutal man. The brute lacks the faculties and powers of a fallen angel that may be perverted to ingenious malevolence.

The struggle for mastery is in the blood. This elemental passion needs edu-

cation and direction. In its more elemental forms it may become the Master Motive in the savage strife for chieftainship. The terrific battle for the leadership of the wild herd of beasts is almost more noble than the struggles for mastery among men, when this struggle is undisciplined by worthy motives and ideals. Business competition may be as merciless as the brute struggle for mastery.

One stage of advance is gained when co-operation supplants competition. Even the "trusts," with all their actual and possible evils, are essentially an advance beyond selfish and narrow competition. A step farther needs to be taken in trust organization and effect—the taking into account the silent partners, the public, the families of working men, society.

And in the control of industry and of industrial organization, the function of government is largely that of umpire or referee to see that the improved rules of the game are observed by all.

Now this is well. But again, let it be said that Jesus and the Christianity of Jesus do not find the goal of purpose here in the "square deal."

The principle the Savior came to teach and to give first place as the Master Motive of men was not to secure merely the "square deal," but to implant in men a noble and generous purpose to serve others, to minister in the highest interests of life.

This is the Motive which He sets before men as the goal of ambition. This primal instinct to gain supremacy is to be disciplined by love until the consuming passion of life shall be not to gain but to give. Of such it may be said:

"Love took up the harp of life, and struck on all
the chords with might;
Struck the chord of self, which, trembling, passed
in music out of sight."

Jesus has come to implant this motive and to make it supreme. Under the "tyranny of the instant" even exponents of the gospel often miss the mark. In a recent sermon which was so much appreciated as to be requested for publication and used in extensive circulation, occurs this sentiment:

"If you are a vertebrate,
Walk straight,
Talk straight,
Write straight,
And fight straight!
Never whine about your fate,
Anywhere and everywhere
Just be on the square;
Help him on while you advance,
Give the other man a chance;
If you are a vertebrate,
Just live straight."

There is a popular appeal in this conception. It lies level to the average comprehension. But if Jesus Christ had come to make that appeal only, we should write Him down with the moralists of the ages. He came with another and diviner appeal. The Master Motive of His own life should become the master motive of men. To Nicodemus in the night interview He said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

It was to make this motive force effective within humanity that Jesus came. To make that motive force effective is the mission and task of discipleship. The

word "Christian" stands centrally for just this, loyalty in spirit and conduct to the Master Motive.

Here is the true philosophy of life. Here lies the true definition of destiny. Destiny is not blind fate, but the open door of opportunity which one must enter or never know the secret of God. Destiny, in the Christian conception, is not blind fate, but a possibility that must be realized in definite consecration and achievement.

"True life is an heroic achievement." Fate never does anything good or ill for anybody. There is no moral destiny save that which is achieved either for good or evil by the response which one makes to the environment about him and the use he makes of the tendencies and aptitudes within him.

So it often happens that a white lily rises somewhere out of the social mire and looks into God's face with the purity of heaven. The secret of character is here: the response of life to the will of God.

Fate apparently decreed that a forlorn lad born in Kentucky in 1809, robbed of his "angel mother" at nine, with a settled melancholy in his very soul that gave

pathos to his rich humor, disappointed for fifty years in almost every cherished ambition, should be a Western frontiersman, ignorant and coarse, limited as were his associates—at best a rough Western lawyer. But destiny decreed otherwise. And in all reverence we must say that "Honest Abe" and Divine Providence worked together to produce our country's savior.

Such destiny may be lost as certainly as it may be won. It is the tragedy of humanity that many doubtless go visionless and unblest through life who might have seen the glory of God and might have wrought at a task that would make angels envious.

A letter from a friend elevated to a high office bore this petition, "Pray that I may not only fill an office, but do a work." And the "work" par excellence of men of Christian faith is to make supreme the Master Motive of Jesus, "I am in the midst of you as he that serveth."

Destiny is thus to be achieved. "We have but to issue commands," says Mæterlinck, "and fate will obey. There is nothing in the world that will offer such long and patient submission."

The Master Word

"But Thee, but Thee, O Sovereign Seer of time,
But Thee, O poets' Poet, wisdom's Tongue,
But Thee, O man's best Man, O love's best Love,
O perfect life in perfect labor writ,
O all men's Comrade, Servant, King, or Priest—
What *if* or *yet*, what mole, what flaw, what lapse,
What least defect or shadow of defect,
What rumor tattled by an enemy,
Of inference loose, what lack of grace
Even in torture's grasp, or sleep's or death's—
Oh, what amiss may I forgive in Thee,
Jesus, good Paragon, Thou Crystal Christ?"

—LANIER.

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."—*Matt. 16: 16.*

"EVERY great man imposes upon the world the task of understanding him." Thus philosophy is still and destined always to be largely an interpretation of Socrates and Plato, of Descartes and Kant and Hegel. From these mountains that hold the snows of summer upon their bosoms the valleys are nourished. All literature of power carries within itself the spiritual gulf streams that spring from the master souls who have lived in the great past.

It is therefore in harmony with a fundamental law that Christianity should consist chiefly in an interpretation of Christ. And when Jesus turned to His disciples with the question, "Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" and the farther and more direct question, "Who say ye that I am?" he asked the most searching and significant question of the ages.

The designation of Himself as the "Son of man" is interesting. This was a term of reproach applied to Him by His enemies. They had said contemptuously, this Jesus is just one of the common people, a "son of man." The disciples never use the expression when addressing Jesus or speaking of Him. But Jesus picked up this term of reproach, a bitter epithet, and wore it. The mud thrown at Jesus by malignant hands was transfigured into a jewel upon His breast. So He lifted the cross and was lifted upon it from ignomy to glory.

Jesus accepted the designation. He identified Himself with the common people. Jesus was the world's great democrat.

And yet He invites such confession concerning Himself as lifts Him into

divine pre-eminence. When Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus was profoundly moved, and placed upon this confession the deepest significance. "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in Heaven. And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Some centuries have passed since Jesus thus stood with His disciples at the headwaters of the beautiful sea. There by the shore, where the waves caressed the sands like a lover's kiss, or hurled their ponderous weight upon the rocks and cliffs, breaking with the laughter of Titans, Jesus asked the Great Question, "Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" "Who do ye say that I am?"

Jesus, with His disciples, had "retreated" into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi. It is said that in this region are the two springs, "Jor" and "Dan," whose combined waters are the source of the river that bears their combined names, the "Jordan."

Jesus loved the solitude, the open sky, the mountain sides, the trees, and the water. He loved "folks," too; but He got away from the crowd at times to be alone with God and with His disciples. There is perfect wholesomeness and poise in the Master's soul.

"Into the woods my Master went,
Clean forspent, forspent.
Into the woods my Master came,
Forspent with love and shame.
But the olives they were not blind to Him,
The little gray leaves were kind to Him:
The thorn-tree had a mind to Him
When into the woods He came.

"Out of the woods my Master went,
And He was well content.
Out of the woods my Master came,
Content with death and shame.
When Death and Shame would woo Him last,
From under the trees they drew Him last:
'T was on a tree they slew Him—last
When out of the woods He came."*

It was here in the retreat by the headwaters of the Jordan "when Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi" that Jesus elicited the Great Confession. He

* A Ballad of Trees and the Master. Lanier.

asked a leading question: he drew Peter out. The time had come for the disciples to know the sweep and power, the majesty of their Lord's personality. He was no mere rabbi after the order of the teachers of Israel.

In answer to His question, "Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" the disciples repeated what men were saying in their attempts to understand Jesus. "Some say John the Baptist; some Elias; and others Jeremias or one of the prophets."

All these were appreciative estimates. This was the best men knew. They could give Jesus no higher honor.

But Jesus elicited and welcomed an entirely different estimate of Himself. Though He called Himself the "Son of man," when Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus replied, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which art in Heaven."

If Jesus ever stated the central and vital principle of religion, it is here. This answer in the Great Confession is the climax, the consummation of revelation.

At the "baptism" the heavens were opened and a voice from above said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Few, very few, indeed, are the authentic instances in which God has thus spoken from the open heavens. The occasion is extraordinary, the endorsement and authentication of Christ complete. Yet this was not the climax or consummation of God's revelation in Christ.

In the temptation Jesus met in type and principle every temptation to which humanity is subject. The appeal of the flesh, that stones be turned to bread, that spiritual powers be used for physical ends; the appeal to the lust of power, the conquest of the world by the world's methods; the appeal to superficial and fictitious spiritual ascendency by mere marvels, such as casting Himself down from the temple with the expectation that He should be upborn by unseen angels' hands. It was a great hour for humanity when Jesus Christ, discerning the very nature of evil, said, "Get thee behind Me, Satan."

At a later day Jesus entered into Jerusalem as a King. The people strewed the

road with their garments and with the branches of trees, and there came from the multitudes a spontaneous "Hosanna in the highest"—that anthem from a people's heart has never ceased to echo round the world—that, too, was a great day for humanity.

But the climax and the consummation of God's revelation in Jesus Christ was not at the temptation and the mastery of evil, nor in the spontaneous acclaim of the multitude, but in the moment of illumination when there sprang from the soul of man the Great Confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

And as Jesus put Himself to the test there in Palestine, so He does in the wider field of human history. Jesus was no provincial; He spoke in world terms, He dealt with humanity, and His program comprises the ages.

And He stands before us to-day with the same question, "Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" "Who do ye say that I am?"

Jesus Christ can not be ignored. He has so wrought Himself into humanity's best life that to ignore Him is insane.

There are various schools of medicine, but underneath all medical science are the forces of nature that heal. There are many kinds of architecture, but none can ignore the power we call gravitation. Jesus stands central in the spiritual life of the world. Sects may differ and even war among themselves, but none can do without Christ. Severed from Him, ethics and religion both are withered branches, and fruitless. The stamp of His authority is upon the very principles which men must use in making moral judgments, and religious faith finds its definition in Him. Love as a motive force in the world springs from this life which John declares was and is "the Light of the world."

Then as now there are various answers to the Great Question. But none now speak ill of Him. He has silenced all cavil and shamed all contempt. Many lips still speak His name in coarse and brutal blasphemy, but even such do not know what they say or do not mean what they say. Taken seriously and sincerely, men reverence Christ. Like the coarse blusterer who was subdued before a great painting of the Christ and unconsciously

removed his hat and spoke softly, so all men do Him reverence.

Yet this kind of respect is not sufficient. To place Him with the great and good, and to call Him one of the prophets, does not suffice. The "Rock" alone sufficient to support the "Church" is the recognition of Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God."

And this recognition is born within men by the light of the Eternal. Flesh and blood does not reveal it. This inward conviction of the Deity of Jesus is inspired by God Himself within the souls of men.

At first glance it seems an astonishing thing that Peter, of all men, should be the one from whom Jesus should elicit this confession, and that to him, of all men, should be given the designation, "Rock."

But Peter was capable of utter sincerity and of clear conviction, courage to step out into new light, capacity for truth. This impulsive and fluctuating man could become as stable as granite. Often we have heard Peter discussed as a "weak" man. This is not a true estimate. A mere weakling is incapable of truth. Jesus selected His man. Peter was capa-

ble later of the broader interpretation of the gospel, and "broke down the middle wall of partition" between the Jews and the Gentiles. He voiced the world-message of salvation.

And strong men and women, capable of conviction and capable of truth, capable of power; men and women, resourceful and of warm sympathies, and capable of splendid devotion, are needed now. The progress of the Kingdom of Christ rests upon men and women who can do things.

But the absolute importance of that initial conviction within the soul—born of God—can not be overlooked. Nothing less than this evidence that God the Father had by His Spirit wrought conviction and given vision to the soul satisfied the Master. He was not looking for mere personal regard from men. They might have exhausted language to speak words of mere eulogy, but that would not have satisfied the eager inquiry of Jesus. All through the ages there have been such words spoken of Jesus as no other has ever elicited.

Jean Paul Richter cried out in ecstasy of Jesus, "The mightiest among the pure

and the purest among the mighty, whose pierced hands have lifted empires off their hinges, turned the stream of the centuries out of its channel, and still rules the ages." Such intellects as Carlyle and Browning have given their unstinted eulogy to this "Crystal Christ."

Yet such testimony alone is not sufficient—there is a sense of incompleteness and insufficiency about it all. We load our shelves with the literature of Christology, and it is the most wonderful literature of the ages; but the ultimate revelation of His divinity is not there—it is within the soul of the humble believer. "Behold," said Jesus, to ordinary men like ourselves, "Behold, the Kingdom of Heaven is within you." The Great Confession, born in the soul by the Spirit of God, that Jesus is the Christ, is alone sufficient.

It is not unusual to try and interpret Christ and Christianity solely in terms of charity. It is easy to remember the emphasis Jesus Himself placed upon doing good and to forget this central emphasis which He placed upon the Great Confession.

Paul seized upon the vital principle of Christian religion when he said, "Though I give my body to be burned and all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." The spirit of love of which Paul speaks is to be indentified with the Great Confession of his own Deity, of which Christ Himself speaks.

Not merely to do good, important as doing good may seem, but the summons to a Christian life is a summons to the Great Confession. This faith in the Son of man as the Christ is the fruitful faith of all the ages.

It is this faith for which men are willing to die, as Chinese Christians showed themselves willing to do in this modern age of martyrs. Not for a dogma, or a system of moral teaching and good works, but for Him who died for them, men and tender women, and even children, are willing to die. This faith has inspired in men supreme allegiance to Jesus Christ.

In the Great Confession lies the dynamics of faith. The Church Jesus founded is not an ethical culture club nor a charity organization, but a body of

disciples who share a common faith. The Great Confession is the master word of union. Believing men may have the widest difference upon other questions, but in answer to the Supreme Question they give one answer, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

There are two symbolic narratives in the Bible that have complementary signification. At the Tower of Babel there was confusion of tongues. Here was the symbol of ambition and selfishness and materialism and the confusion, the spiritual confusion, that results. On the day of Pentecost, on the contrary, men heard each in his own tongue the marvelous message of the gospel and there was unity. Ultimately all disunion and discord will be harmonized in the Great Confession.

Vision and Task

"But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will
that can,
Existent behind all laws, that made them and, lo,
they are!
And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed
to man,
That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth
sound, but a star.
Consider it well: each tone of our scale in itself is
nought;
It is everywhere in the world—loud, soft, and all
is said:
Give it to me to use! I mix it with two in my
thought,
And there! Ye have heard and seen: consider
and bow the head!

"Well, it is gone at last, the palace of music I reared;
Gone! and the good tears start, the praises that
come too slow,
For one is assured at first, one scarce can say that
he feared,
That he even gave it a thought, the one thing
was to go.

Never to be again! But many more of the kind
As good, nay, better perchance: is this your comfort to me?
To me, who must be saved because I cling with my mind
To the same, same self, same love, same God: ay, what was, shall be."—BROWNING.

"There comes a moment in life when moral beauty seems more urgent, more penetrating than intellectual beauty; when all the mind has treasured must be bathed in the greatness of soul, lest it perish in the sandy desert, forlorn as the river that seeks in vain for the sea."

"Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us."—*Psalms 90: 17.*

"I was not disobedient unto the Heavenly vision."—*Paul.*

"And He (Jesus) turned Him unto His disciples and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see."—*Luke 10: 23.*

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God,
I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all flesh:
And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
And your young men shall see visions,
And your old men shall dream dreams:
Yea, and on my servants and on my handmaidens in those days
Will I pour forth of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy."—*Acts 2.*

SEAFARERS take their bearings from the stars. At stated intervals, though upon familiar waters, they determine their own latitude and longitude by fresh observations of the heavenly bodies. The conservation of life's great reverences, the preservation of faith in their own spiritual capacity, the gift of vision, the worth of personality, the fact of God—these are the fixed stars by which men must get their reckonings.

Two things are to be noted concerning the man of vision. First, he has the right of way. To him other men must listen. He has the significant word. And second, the intimate and vital relationship between vision and task. Vision and task go together. Without vision there can be no purposeful task. And without definite task the power of vision is lost. Mr. Chamberlain, in a remarkable discussion of the relationship between poetry and music* shows that music, except as wedded to poetry, loses definite significance, and that poetry finds its completest and highest expression in musical form. Thus, too,

* *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, Chamberlain, vol. II, p. 506.

vision and task stand in mutual and interdependent relation.

But vision must have validity. The more thoroughly penetrating and searching in its test of realities the power of vision becomes, the greater the range and sweep and constructive use of this power. Angelo greatly increased the possibilities of art by his thoroughly original and faithful study of human anatomy. His figures departed absolutely from the conventional style of treatment that had prevailed. His men had skeletons and muscles and nerves—all as faithfully underlying the superficial painting or sculpture as though he had been a teacher of anatomy. Nature is infinitely richer than unintelligent fancy. Task and vision here in the master of art in its noblest forms were most intimately wedded.

There is a tradition cherished that Hiram Abi (or Hiram the master), who had charge of the building of Solomon's Temple, was slain. The man of vision having been removed, confusion resulted. There could be no progress without definite plans from the man of vision. Like a swarm of bees whose queen had been

killed, there was chaos. Sacred tradition also tells us of an ancient "skyscraper," the "Tower of Babel," work upon which fell into chaotic disorder by reason of a "confusion of tongues." Here, too, is suggested the loss of vision. Before Michael Angelo was commissioned to plan St. Peter's, there had been many designs submitted—fussy, elaborate and ambitious, confused and lacking in both dignity and unity of conception. At last the master had a vision of the great dome swung between heaven and earth that it was the task of the age to realize in marble and gold.

So into the petty politics and policies, the selfish ambition of rulers and States, God thrusts forward now and again a statesman, the man of vision, and out of confusion and chaos governments spring that embody new and grander ideas of national power and purpose.

Sometimes the doer and the seer are not the same, but different men who work together. Hegel, at the siege of Jena, working away at his window on the concluding chapters of his "Phenomenology of Spirit," while Napoleon, with an army

of a hundred thousand men, was pounding the city's defenses to pieces, was laying down in definiteness of conception the ideal of national solidarity that afterwards Bismarck for Germany and Lincoln for America made so effective in the most notable political achievements of the age. So Mazzini and Garibaldi, Cavour and the Immanuels have conspired together—wrought together—for the new Italy. Without the men of vision the restless energies of men would perhaps mark time on battlefields and in halls of legislation; but there could be no progress.

The Bible method culminates its record of vision and the power of vision in the most marvelous of all visions—the vision and the power of vision in the mind of the Master. Jesus was the greatest of all the prophets, of a remarkable lineage of men of vision. Jesus cherished the power of vision as the highest power that even He possessed.

On the Mount of Transfiguration there was converse about the future. Here the spiritual statesmanship of the centuries mapped out the program of the ages to come. Jesus cherished the power of

vision in His disciples. He did not attempt to shield them from the storm and stress of world conflict. He "sent them forth" to breast the world. As a sufficient safeguard, He promised them spiritual baptism. And when the promise found distinctive fulfillment on the "Day of Pentecost," a man of vision stood up to say, "This is that which hath been spoken."

"And it shall be in the last days, saith God,
I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all flesh:
And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
And your young men shall see visions,
And your old men shall dream dreams:
Yea, and on My servants and on My handmaidens in those days
Will I pour forth of My Spirit, and they shall prophesy."

The method of Jesus is thus in profound harmony with the method of progress elsewhere. It would be strange if in the supreme matters of the Spirit, and in the execution of a world program, Jesus Christ should not illustrate the very highest use of the power of vision. He gave His disciples little of ritual and nothing of organization. Baptism and a Prayer and a Supper of Spiritual Fellowship.

These seem a meager program for world organization. But in the hearts of the men He sent forth lay the Master Secret and the Master Motive. And the source of inspiration was open to them in the presence of the Comforter. With such equipment men become invincible. They and their vision belong to the ages, and their task is humanity's task.

"Your young men shall see visions." Youth is the time of vision. The world progresses no farther in any generation than its young men can see in its beginning. The achievement of an age will not go an inch beyond the dreams of its spiritual architects. The chisels of the workmen will never cut out from marble or granite any nobler statues than those that live in the imagination of the artist who conceives and directs their labors. If we would measure men, we must know the size of their convictions, the moral girth of their ideas. Ultimately, the measure of man must be the radius of his vision, the sweep of his horizon, the outlook from the towers of his soul. The opportune time for mastering life's spiritual geometry is in the dewy morning, when the birds are

a-song in the trees, and the sunlight of the new day is unclouded, and there is bounding energy in the unstiffened joints. There is a philosophy in the regulation that an amateur athlete shall compete but a certain length of time. Soon his day is past. His opportunities are few. He may come to the climax of power but once. He makes his record and must be estimated by that standard ever after. You may try once for the *far* vision. You may ascend once into the mountain and try to read God's thoughts after Him. The tabernacle of your life will be built after that vision. You will have no other. If you have caught no vision, if no great enthusiasm seizes you then, you are no prophet. You may do good work in the world, but it must be henceforth as a labor for another. You are not capable of spiritual initiation, you have no clear vision of a tabernacle which you are to build, you may only help to build other's.

Valid vision discriminates values.

It has often been noted that the Apostle Paul had profound influence in shaping the Christian conceptions of the early centuries, and so of all Christian

theology. Sometimes this is noted as though Paul had so modified the original teaching of Jesus and the belief of the disciples as to vitiate the purity of the original teaching. On the contrary, it was this man of vision who saw the significance of the Cross and lifted in into place and power forever as the central symbol of faith. Here was the man of discrimination whose call to apostleship was so important and significant that we have the record of the remarkable experience. To this one man, as though thus to set out the supreme import of his future task, Jesus appeared and upon him laid the Master task of the ages. He was the seer whose vision should culminate the prophetic foreshadowings of many centuries and form the basis of the program of future ages. When Jesus left to His discipleship the great commission to go into all the world preaching the gospel, He gave to this man of vision, "born out of due time," the task of defining the commission.

The culmination of the divine purposes is to be found in the realm of human personalities and human achievement. Here, if anywhere, the function of vision will find

perpetual place. Is any Utopia of economic justice to be realized in this world of selfish struggle? It will be when, and only when, men of vision share increasingly the vision of Jesus and the compassion of Jesus, and make both the vision and the passion compelling upon society. Will the dream of democratic equality ever be more than a "dream?" It will when men of commanding leadership are possessed with unshakable conviction that the ethics of democracy have divine sanction, when they make all men see the beauty and the truth of the world's great Democrat, Jesus the Christ. Shall the world be Christianized, or shall a hybrid religion, an eclectic patchword creed, weak and ineffective as such hybrids and patchworks always are, gradually usurp the place of a definite faith and leave even the most virile of races characterless mongrels with shadow gods of abstract speculation? If the world is Christianized, it will be by reason of the leadership of men and women of vision who possess the audacity of a mighty faith and who grip the world with the power of valid vision.

The time has come either to vindicate

the claims of Jesus Christ as the world's Redeemer or to admit that He is only one of many "incarnations" of varying validity and possible uses. The challenge of the age to men of faith can neither be appreciated nor accepted except by men of vision. Now, even more than at Pentecost, God must pour out of His Spirit that young men shall see visions and old men dream dreams—visions and dreams that spring from the heart of the Eternal.

Into such privilege and power the Lord of life would lead all of us who are able and willing to be baptized with the baptism wherewith He was baptized. Service and Duty never pulsed with such tremendous meaning as now. To conquer the masterful but brutal materialism of the age, to command men to swing their splendid energies into a spiritual program, to inaugurate a world brotherhood and a world faith that shall grip vitally the convictions of men is an achievement in which the souls that are found worthy may well aspire to share.

Tennyson's son, in the "Memoir," says: "My father felt strongly that only under the inspiration of ideals, and with

his 'sword bathed in Heaven,' can a man combat the cynical indifference, the intellectual selfishness, the sloth of will, the utilitarian materialism of a transition age. 'Poetry is truer than fact,' he would say. Guided by the voice within, the ideal soul looks out into the Infinite for the highest Ideal, and finds it nowhere realized so mightily as in the 'Word' who 'wrought with human hands the creed of creeds.'"*

This is man's great spiritual task in life—to grasp the ideal, to gain the heavenly vision, and then to make it imperial in the realm of the real: to transfigure stone and dust by the power of the Spirit, to "trouble the clod by a spark," to find the imprisoned idea in rough blocks of granite and marble, to transform sinful men into sons of God by faith.

* *Memoir Lord Tennyson*, vol. II, p. 129.

An Ancient Psalm of Life

The 90th Psalm, "A Prayer of Moses, the Man of God."

"Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place
In all generations.
Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting,
Thou art God.
Thou turnest man to destruction;
And sayest, Return, ye children of men.
For a thousand years in Thy sight
Are but as yesterday when it is past,
And as a watch in the night.
Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep:
In the morning they are like grass which groweth up.
In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up;
In the evening it is cut down, and withereth.
For we are consumed in Thine anger,
And in Thy wrath are we troubled.
Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee,
Our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance.

AN ANCIENT PSALM OF LIFE

For all our days are passed away in Thy
wrath:
We bring our years to an end as a tale
that is told.
The days of our years are threescore years
and ten,
Or even by reason of strength fourscore
years;
Yet is their pride but labor and sorrow;
For it is soon gone, and we fly away.
Who knoweth the power of Thine anger,
And Thy wrath according to the fear that
is due unto Thee?
So teach us to number our days,
That we may get us an heart of wisdom.
Return, O Lord; how long?
And let it repent Thee concerning Thy
servants.
O satisfy us in the morning with Thy mercy,
That we may rejoice and be glad all our
days.
Make us glad according to the days wherein
Thou hast afflicted us,
And the years wherein we have seen evil.
Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants,
And Thy glory upon their children.
And let the beauty of the Lord our God be
upon us:
And establish Thou the work of our hands
upon us;
Yea, the work of our hands establish Thou
it."

No ear that has ever been attuned to the noblest music can fail to be charmed by the transcendent beauty of this closing stanza of an immortal poem. It is the utterance of an old man, not grown garrulous, but grand, with the years; one who has passed through the vicissitudes of a noble career, a master mind of two religions and two civilizations who was summoned to great leadership by the direct command of God, whom He met face to face by the burning bush and in the solitudes of Sinai. The 90th Psalm has come down to us through the centuries as the deepest heart utterance of Moses, the man of God.

Out from these sublime solitudes of the mountain and the soul this man came forth with a moral grandeur of character and a spiritual vision that made him not merely the prophet and lawgiver of Israel, but the universal seer.

There are men who stamp the die of their souls upon the thoughts of power that live on through history, and whose personalities must be reckoned with as the most potent of the world-forces that construct civilizations and religions. Such

a man was Moses. Though the chroniclers had added volume to volume of the deeds of this man of God, it would have compensated but ill for the loss of this brief psalm which gathers up his philosophy and deep-souled faith. The great soul-utterance of Moses is here.

Sometimes a great man has waited for the centuries to mature an appreciation of his character, until at last some poet or artist has arisen with genius to paint him in rugged grandeur and transcendent beauty till all men see the greatness of his character.

Thus St. Gaudens has chiseled the Puritan, and thus Hoffman has painted the Christ, and thus Angelo conceived the greatness of Moses' character and chiseled it in marble. None who has ever looked upon Angelo's Moses can fail to have received a lasting impression of the ethical exaltation and strength, the intellectual power, the spiritual grandeur of this man of God.

But it seems to me that this noble and spiritual conception of the character of Moses is more largely derived from the revelation which this psalm contains than

from all the record of his life and deeds. To be sure, the psalm would not be sufficient in itself, but, standing out against the background of the deeds and the words of the man, it constitutes the spiritual flower of the revelation of his character.

Under the pressure and the discipline of great responsibilities, great characters are formed. It was under the stress and strain of the deathless and grim struggle for freedom that William of Orange grew into the princely and patient leader; it was through the unspeakable sorrow of a great people, the moral struggle of a nation, the pathos of suffering which all could pity but none could stay, that Lincoln grew to the intellectual and moral grandeur that made possible and inevitable his historical designation as the savior of his country.

Moses was potentially great when he turned his back on the court of Pharaoh, despising the luxuries of an Egyptian palace in comparison with the excellence of a spiritual inheritance with his own race. It was this initial excellence of character that called forth the eulogy of the book of

Hebrews, "Choosing rather to be evil entreated with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

Dwell with me for a moment upon this wondrous psalm:

"Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.
Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God."

These utterances stand nobly by the side of the first word of the Sacred Scriptures, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." It marks the distinguishing characteristic of the Bible. It lifts and defines in one great word the conception of the personality of God that overarches all uplifting and hopeful religious faith.

"Thou turnest man to destruction,
And sayest, Return, ye children of men."

We can imagine Moses turning back in retrospect over the forty dreary but significant years of the wilderness journey, a

time of moral discipline, when these Hebrew people learned the stern lesson that God is in earnest and that He stands for moral worth, intellectual sincerity, and sterling achievement; that God is the Eternal, that His purposes persist, that men perish either in judgment or in frailty, but that

"Through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns."

"For a thousand years in Thy sight
Are but as yesterday when it is past,
And as a watch in the night.
Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep;
In the morning they are like grass which groweth up.
In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up;
In the evening it is cut down, and withereth.
For we are consumed in Thine anger,
And in Thy wrath are we troubled.
Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee,
Our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance.
For all our days are passed away in Thy wrath;
We bring our years to an end as a tale that is told.
The days of our years are threescore years and ten,
Or even by reason of strength fourscore years;
Yet is their pride but labor and sorrow;
For it is soon gone, and we fly away."

It is no matter of surprise, when we enter deeply into sympathy with Moses, that he should have expressed the feeling of awe at the evident judgments of God. And yet it is not the craven fear of a groping ignorance, appalled at the calamities and sorrows of life, but the utterance of a man who can stand forth in moral and spiritual dignity, and in the faith that there is a divine wisdom and mercy at the heart of the dark mysteries of life.

"Who knoweth the power of Thine anger,
And Thy wrath, according to the fear that is
due unto Thee?
So teach us to number our days,
That we may get us an heart of wisdom."

These considerations lead the man of God to a prayer of penitence and of supplication.

"Return, O Lord; how long?
And let it repent Thee concerning Thy servants.
O satisfy us in the morning with Thy mercy;
That we may rejoice and be glad all our days.
Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou
hast afflicted us,
And the years wherein we have seen evil."

And then follows the magnificent op-

timism, the outlook of faith, the spiritual mastery over life of these words of our psalm:

"Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants,
And Thy glory upon their children.
And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us;
And establish Thou the work of our hands upon us;
Yea, the work of our hands, establish Thou it."

The work and the glory and the beauty of God to be revealed to His children, and the establishment of their work in glory and beauty like unto His glory and beauty —this is Moses' prayer.

THE "WORK OF GOD."—This word "work" is fundamental in our speech. The root of this word, as well as the energy of its thought, gives vigor to the speech of all Germanic and Saxon peoples. It is "werken" in German. It is the synonym of the Greek root "energos," whence we derive the word energy.

The work of God means the energizing of God. Note how Moses came to recognize the fact that God energizes or works, that God is actively interested in the af-

fairs of the world and of men, that God has purposes and plans. This vigorous and clear conception by Moses was no doubt the effect of the study of the religion of his people. The Hebrews had this characteristic excellence in all their education. They thoroughly drilled into their youth a reverent appreciation of the traditional heroes of the race, and these traditional heroes brought into bold relief the qualities of characteristic moral and spiritual strength. Their Scriptures held the treasures of spiritual conception that have made them the richest inheritance of the human race. Thus we have in Paul's letters to Timothy a picture of the youth in characteristic Hebrew fashion learning the Scriptures at his mother's knee; and thus we have the treasured picture of the Christ at the age of twelve drawing near to the holy city and its temple with the spiritual exaltation that always thrills us with wonder as we reread the narration. Thus the group at Bethlehem at the time of the Nativity are filled with thoughts of God and of His great and gracious purposes for the race, and their prayers took shape in the language of their great

prophets and psalmists. And thus Moses, at his mother's knee, was taught the religion of his people until he saw the incomparable excellence and worth of his spiritual inheritance by birth.

It suggests to us a lesson that this age sorely needs—the priceless value of traditional faith. We have made such astonishing advancement in material ways and in political achievements, and transition in thought conceptions of life and of human destiny have been so rapid, and the molds in which faith shall cast its creeds have been broken and abandoned and formed anew with such facility that we are in the gravest danger of putting a cheap estimate upon the priceless treasures of traditional faith. I have lived in the country; I have lived in the heart of the great city; I have lived in the midst of university and college life; I have lived in the midst of the modern commercial world; I have felt the stress and strain to which men are subject in the university and on the board of trade, on the farm and in the factory, and I am ready to say that there is nothing of such supreme value to us as a people and as individuals as the

deep religious faith of our fathers. In the crucial periods of our national history we have felt the saving strength of this faith—faith in God, and belief in His purposes, and trust in righteousness and conviction of duty.

In the home life of our people religion has had a queenly place. Hardship and poverty, disappointment and death have all been met and overcome in the spirit of patience and of victorious hope. Men's souls have withstood the grinding contact of the world with its eager enterprise and often seeming contempt for the spiritual. The family Bible and the family altar, the Church and the school have kept alive in men's souls ideals of purity and of duty and have cherished a spirit of gentleness and of righteousness that have kept open the springs of purest inspiration and of earnest endeavor.

It is out from such homes that God has called earnest and successful workers in the world's great enterprises. From such homes have come statesmen who could construct political institutions that should endure because built in righteousness and in wisdom. It is out from such

homes that men have come with a lofty spirit of devotion to answer the call of the State and of the school and of the Church for high and holy service. It is in such homes that the call to the Christian ministry has been heard and the incentive to an education has been felt.

When given an opportunity to know the beauty and the power of the incentives which spring from spiritual ideals and religious faith, young men and women have scorned being merely mercenary or frivolously selfish.

The people who have lived near God and have cherished belief in the divine providence and in divine purpose have, by their faith, thrown a glory over life and relieved its hardness. It is by faith that men and women have been made patient and able to endure as "seeing Him who is invisible." It has been my rich privilege to know many such homes as these of which I speak, and to see come out from them the young men and women of purity of life, of lofty aspirations, and of earnest purposes that augur well for the constructive work and the spiritual achievements of the future.

I am convinced that the blight of heart-atheism would be the most fatal that could fall upon us. A blight upon the fields might leave us hungry; a plague among the cattle and swine might leave us poor; but out from such hunger and such poverty we might come cleaner and stronger for the future: but a blight upon the soul, although the harvests should remain rich and the cattle multiply upon a thousand hills, would leave us unspeakably wretched and miserably poor.

"Where there is no vision the people perish." The conviction which grew upon Moses and the Hebrew people, the conviction of the moral earnestness of God, is of as fundamental importance to the stability of our civilization as it was to the nationality of the Hebrews. This age of science and of marvelous material achievement needs nothing so much as clear spiritual vision and a genuine and earnest faith. This conviction and this faith were wrought in Moses and in the Hebrew people by the stern discipline of the wilderness. Looking back upon it, Moses said, "Thou carriest them away as with a flood." God sloughs off the work of men

when extraneous to His purpose; "the wicked are like the chaff which the wind driveth away."

Men do not achieve enduring results save as they build in harmony with God's ideals. If we were standing to-day in Westminster Abbey, we should be impressed with two things: first, as to the engineering fidelity of the builders of this noble temple. They wrought in accordance with the plans and the specifications of the Infinite. Engineering is nothing more nor less than an apprenticeship in the drafting rooms of the Creator, and so these walls stand stanch and beautiful because they conform with more or less fidelity to the plans of the Chief Engineer; but, back of its engineering fidelity, you would be impressed with its religious and spiritual validity. It is a temple for worship. It represents and epitomizes the spiritual life of a great people and victorious race. Within its walls rest the dust of Britain's most illustrious sons. Here the generations have continuity. Here is fitly symbolized the ethical and spiritual faith of the nation, and so the temple stands worthily in the metropolis

of the kingdom, with perennial and noble significance. But if it were only a pile of stone and of mortar, if it had no ideals breathing life and beauty upon it, it would be of no more value than any other stone-pile.

After much else has been forgotten—much of incident and of passion of the fearful civil strife that rent our country for four long years—the memory of Lincoln in humble prayer before God, with deepest agony of soul for his country, and yet calm by the sustaining power of a sublime faith, will be sketched upon the page of our national history. If there is anything that shall endure through the centuries from the constructive work of these past years, it will be because men have built in harmony with the purposes of God.*

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* In the *Life of Governor Andrew of Massachusetts* an incident is given which throws light upon the secret of reserved strength in Lincoln's character, and the religious quality of the patriotism of his stanch supporters. It was in the summer of 1862, when emancipation was being talked a great deal. One day Governor Andrew sent for Edward W. Kingsley and greeted him with the blunt words, "How do you do? I want you to go to Washington." Mr. Kingsley replied, "'Why, Governor,' said I, 'I can't go to Washington on any such notice as this. I am busy, and it is impossible for me to go.' 'All my folks are serving their country,' said he; and he mentioned the various services the members of his staff were engaged in, and said with emphasis, 'Somebody must go to Washington . . . I command you to go.' 'Well,' said I, 'Governor, put it in that way and I shall go, of course.' 'There is something going on,' he remarked. 'This is a momentous

There is in this prayer of Moses a petition for an awakening capacity. "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and they glory unto their children." It seems that Moses himself needed to be startled into an appreciation of the divine presence, as at the burning bush, and again, disciplined through forty long years in the mountain silences, to the capacity or power of listening to the divine voice that should summon him to great tasks and high duty. And the people under his leadership needed also the long discipline of the wilderness before they acquired the

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time.' He turned suddenly toward me and said, 'You believe in prayer, do n't you?' I said, 'Why, of course.' 'Then let us pray;' and he knelt right down at the chair that was placed there; we both kneeled down, and I never heard such a prayer in all my life. I never was so near the throne of God, except when my mother died, as I was then. I said to the Governor, ' . . . I will start this afternoon for Washington.' I soon found out that emancipation was in everybody's mouth, and when I got to Washington, and called upon Sumner, he began to talk emancipation. He asked me to go and see the President, and tell him how the people of Boston and New England regarded it. I went to the White House that evening and met the President. We first talked about everything but emancipation, and finally he asked me what I thought about emancipation. I told him what I thought about it, and said that Governor Andrew was so far interested in it that I had no doubt he had sent me there to post the President in regard to what the class of people I met in Boston and New York thought of it, and then I repeated to him, as I had previously to Sumner, this prayer of the Governor's, as well as I could remember it. The President said, 'When we have the Governor of Massachusetts to send us troops in the way he has, and when we have him to utter such prayers for us, I have no doubt that we shall succeed.'"—Pearson's *Life of John A. Andrew*, vol. II, p. 47.

spiritual education to co-operate with the divine purposes.

There is appalling moral waste in the world. Waste because men work at cross-purposes with God, and their work comes to naught; and men work at cross-purposes with God either through willfulness or ignorance—through willfulness when, like undisciplined children, they fancy their own way and will to be better than God's way and God's will, and through ignorance, from lack of spiritual vision and spiritual faith, they become little and provincial in the great Universe of God.

Talleyrand was dining with Wellington when word came that Napoleon was dead. "What an event," they all cried. " 'T is no event," said Talleyrand, " 'T is but a piece of news;" and Talleyrand was right. Napoleon's genius was prostituted to a selfish ambition. He is memorable in history because of the temporary disturbance which he made among the powers of Europe, because of his colossal schemes, because of his military genius, and because through him multitudes perished in battle, because he impoverished a nation. France has never yet recovered from the waste

and the exhaustion of the Napoleonic régime. Grant would not visit the tomb of Napoleon, such was his repugnance and righteous indignation at the character and the career of the Corsican. Napoleon must be recorded in history as a mere provincial. His work does not endure.

Moreover, besides the necessity of working in harmony with God, if man's work shall endure, there is the necessity for sincere and genuine and pure character if men would thus be treasured in memory along with the good causes which they have advocated. Gladstone is quoted by Morley as saying of Parnell and of Parnell's brazenness in the face of the exposure of his personal impurity, that Parnell represented "the unruffled continuity of stained leadership;" and through the moral judgment of the people of England and of Ireland Parnell has been branded and was obliged at last to retire ignobly.

Browning, in Paracelsus, speaks of one upon whom the moral judgment of God was wrought like this:

> " . . . No mean trick
> He left untried, and truly well-nigh wormed
> All traces of God's finger out of him:
> Then died, grown old."

And in Browning's verse, such an one is contrasted with another who

"Never turned his back, but marched breast-forward.
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted,
Wrong would triumph.
Hold we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake."

To such faith and such optimism those alone have right who put themselves in tune with the Infinite.

Longfellow makes Angelo say to a detractor:

"He says I show mankind that I am wanting
In piety and religion, in proportion
As I profess perfection in my art.
Profess perfection! Why 't is only men
Like Bugiardini who are satisfied
With what they do. I never am content,
But always see the labors of my hand
Fall short of my conception."

And to have held the ideal, and to have been patiently devoted and not to have debased the conceptions of the soul, this at last is the final reward.

"Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us."

Christianity and the Supernatural*

METHOD.—When one contemplates the heavy strain that is put upon the faith of people who listen to a series of apologetic or defensive lectures, and who read them, it is enough to make one hesitate about adding another ounce to the burden. Somewhere I have read of a verger who said he sat through twenty series of Bampton lectures on "The Defense of Faith" and that he still remained a humble believer. Not all humble believers, however, are proof against the perils of an attempt to defend their faith. Too elaborate and careful defensive operations usually suggest one of three things: an apprehension of weakness within that which is to be defended, a fear of the attacking force, or a McClellan-like power of constructive imagination that distrusts its own strength while quadrupling the actual strength of the enemy.

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So the rôle of an apologist is not an easy, but a difficult one. And never more difficult than to-day, when all apologetics and the very attitude of defense of faith are discounted and discredited to begin with as savoring of dogmatism and lacking the scientific spirit of fearless freedom in all inquiry.

Yet it may well be asked whether the positive attitude and the apologetic method may not be quite as legitimate and quite as necessary in arriving at truth as the attitude of neutrality. A cold-blooded analytical method may miss something essential. A corpse is not a living organism, and the anatomist, in his study of structures and analysis of tissues and gases, should not forget that he is after all only studying a magnificent ruin, a splendid débris. Life has accomplished its finer purpose and has fled. The anatomist is not in the presence of the mystery of life—he is in a morgue. The scientific method is quite right—the method of severe analysis and testing of evidence, and loyalty to the facts regardless of preconceptions or wishes or prejudices or consequences—the scientific method is of incalculable

value; but there is always danger that some essential factors shall be omitted in the calculation, that something important shall be overlooked. And in the effort to estimate the things of faith and to account for faith and to assay the spirit, the scientific method under the dominance of a prejudice for materialistic or mechanical, or even physiological theories, may lead the investigator to overlook something essential, to forget the soul. And the scientific investigator may become impatient and fretful when urged to take into account the factors which he has omitted in his calculations.

Years ago Joseph Cook told us how Professor Tyndall, on the Alps in company with a friend, was requested to tell what is behind the keyboard of the nerves in man, or, in other words, what causes in the substance of the brain the molecular motions which are supposed to be the basis of thought, choice, and emotion. Not able to give any satisfactory answer, Tyndall at last burst out with these frank words: "I view nature, existence, the universe as the keyboard of a pianoforte. What came before the bass I do not know

and I do not care. What comes after the treble I equally little know or care. The keyboard, with its white and black keys, is mine to study."

Now, we may not quarrel with Professor Tyndall, or with any one else who frankly limits his researches to the black and white keys, but there are those who do care about something else. And for the larger purposes of truth and life, we do object to the closing of the door in *our* faces or to the arrogance of dogmatic negation that pronounces worthless all that does not come within its own accepted categories. As between the dogmatism of negation and the dogmatism of belief, I am disposed to the opinion that the dogmatism of belief may be in a better way to reach the "substance of things not seen." In other words, may there not be as great a degree of open-mindedness to the light of truth in an attitude and by a method that takes into account the data of spirit, and is not perforce limited to the mechanical categories of physical science, as in the attitude and the method that are so limited?

It is now some years since Goldwin

Smith, in his "Study of History," wrote this warning:

"I see no impossibility, but an extreme likelihood, that physical science, having lately achieved so much, should arrogate more than she has achieved and that a mock science should thus have been set up where the domain of real science ends."

And again he says:

"Why may there not be a whole sphere of existence, embracing the relations and the communion between God and man, with which natural science has no concern, and in which her dictation is as impertinent as the dictation of theology in physics."

This is precisely what has happened. So both Science and Theology are now quits. Theology did for a long time undertake to dictate in physics, and Science has undertaken to dictate in Theology. Each has tried to apply its own categories in the field of the other. In the supposed interest of the authority of the Bible, for example, Theology assumed that Biblical statements about the creation of the world must be good scientific geology. To question the accuracy of any Biblical statement about nature or the processes of

nature has been thought to endanger its authority upon other matters, including spiritual and ethical principles. If the Bible says that the sun stood still, then it stood still. To question the authority of Scripture upon a statement of a physical fact might jeopardize its authority when it says, in the words of Jesus, that the first law of life is to love God and the second to love our neighbors. *Theories* of Biblical inspiration and of authority have made it *seem* necessary to defend the scientific accuracy of the account of Creation. If Moses is the author, then he must be made out a good geologist as well as a law-giver in religion and morals. And so ecclesiastical authority makes a Galileo recant, pronounces in the name of religion upon scientific theories like that of evolution, seeks to extend the authority of Scripture, however erroneously interpreted, over the realm of Science. This is an impertinence. It is no small gain that the sphere of the legitimate authority of Scripture has been limited and defined.

The opening verse of Scripture ought to have saved men from much blundering as to the nature and purpose of all Scrip-

ture, if they had heeded its tone and accent. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." A sublime religious conception! It has held before men's minds through the ages the idea of a personal Creator. Its purpose is religious, not scientific. Under the light and the power of that conception, it became exceedingly difficult even in superstitious and idolatrous times for men—Hebrew men—to fall into idolatry. And this was its purpose. How entirely inapt and useless to have substituted, even if it had been conceivably possible, a scientific treatise on the physical processes of the evolution of the world and life! Here is a poem—a religious poem—whether by Moses or handed down from remoter ages, of the sublime religious conception of a Personal Creator whom men ought to worship and obey.

But Science, too, has been dogmatic and over-reaching. In the name of Science the most dogmatic positions have been taken limiting knowledge to the categories of physical science. God and the soul must yield evidence of reality in the test-tubes and on the balances of the physical

laboratories or cease to hold respectable place among the verities.

Dualism.—It has seemed to earnest-thinking men intolerable that there should be two realms or worlds set against each other, disparate and irreconcilable; a world of the spirit and a physical world. Such an opposition could not stand. Kant worked out, in his critique of "Pure Reason" and in his critique of "Practical Reason," two separate worlds, and thought it possible for a man to live in both at once. But upon his death, and before, men set to work to try and reconcile and unify the two.

One way of reconciliation is to adopt frankly the mechanical conception of the world, including human life. This will stop the voice of prayer as it did with Romanes. The mechanism of the physical universe grinds on remorselessly. It is idle to pray. We are ourselves a part of this mechanism. If we could know all that might conceivably be known about the hereditary influences that have converged in any individual life, and could know all that might conceivably be known

about the influences of environment, we should be able, with the certainty of a mathematical demonstration, to determine exactly what kind of a man he must be, what the things he would think, and what the things he would do. Freedom of choice becomes a fancy. It is the moth thinking itself free in flight, but destined, inevitably, to drop into the flame. And so men like John Stewart Mill become disciples of Necessity, as absolutely as the ancient Greeks became the helpless subjects of Fate.

But this mechanical conception did have the merit of unity. A mechanical and necessitated world was better, so far as mental poise was concerned, than a dual and distracted and hopelessly contradictory one.

Over against the theory of mechanical necessity has stood an equally radical spiritualism, that ignores the physical as having any reality. We may admire the heroic fortitude of him *who will have unity* even at the cost of denying reality to the stone against which he stubs his toe, but few of us can rise to that height of imaginary mastery over tough facts.

Use of Supernatural.—And now I wish to call attention to what is really the thesis of this lecture—the essentially spiritual character of the Christian religion and the use which has been made of the supernatural, including the miraculous, to emphasize the fact of spirit.

Christianity is essentially a religion of spiritual freedom. The marginal reading of John 3: 8 is direct instead of figurative:

> "The Spirit breatheth where he listeth, and thou hearest his voice, but knoweth not whence he cometh or whither he goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Christianity is the religion of spirit and personality; of life and love; of freedom and immortality. These are the great words of Scripture—the keynotes of Christianity.

But in striking these keynotes, use has been made of the supernatural.

It is not my purpose to enter into a discussion of miracles, much less to undertake a detailed defense of Biblical miracles. But I do want you to see the practical use which is made of them here in the Bible. Everywhere the supremacy of mind, of

spirit is emphasized, and at times tremendously emphasized by the presence of miracle. The miraculous is really much less in proportion in the Bible than we are accustomed to think. The few, the relatively very few, instances given, however, serve to emphasize the presence and the supremacy of Spirit.

Some one has said recently that the Biblical miracles are an embarrassment to faith, a burden that Christian belief would like to be rid of if it could. But let us remember that the Bible was not conceived solely for us in this scientific age, full of conceit at its own superior wisdom, strongly biased and prejudiced by the dominant theories that speak in the name and by the authority of Modern Science. For thousands of years Science was not dreamed of. But men had to live their lives in very real contact with this stubborn physical world and the presence of spiritual verities as well. How should they find intellectual peace in a conception of unity, and where should rest be found for the weary spirit? The *method* of revelation is least of all any attempt at premature science. How confusing and use-

less all that would have been! But men are taught the fact of Divine Personality and the fact of human personality. The spirit is challenged to conscious freedom. The soul is commanded to a mighty faith.

And there were ages when it would seem that nothing could have driven this challenge home to the souls of men like the presence of miracle. We may receive that challenge more effectively by other means, but for those ages of formative faith, and with a radically different intellectual horizon and atmosphere, this was the most effective means.

And it accomplished this purpose

Character of Biblical Miracles.—While some of the recorded Biblical miracles may be of much less apparent significance than others, their character is in general one of great dignity and effectiveness.

Let us take a single illustration, that of Elijah and the priests of Baal. It is a time of decline in nobler religious conceptions and nobler living. From the court to the peasant this half-rude people were become religiously sodden. They had lost

the inspiring vision of God of earlier days. Ahab, the king, had married a Phœnician princess, who introduced Baal-worship. A crisis had come—one of the great crises of history. Spiritual and ethical religion was in danger of perishing. There is no more striking figure in history than that of Elijah the prophet as he stands forward to meet this crisis

The setting is dramatic. This man of Jehovah, with his rough skin mantle and flowing locks and rugged grandeur of character, challenges Baal-worship to the kind of test that to that age would be most decisive. Let the God that answers by fire be God. The priests of Baal prepare their altar and their sacrifice, and work themselves into a frenzy throughout the entire day in calling upon their god to answer by fire; and he does not answer. Elijah taunts them, and we feel the terrible scorn of his taunt. "Elijah mocked them and said, Cry aloud; for he is a god; either he is musing or he is gone aside, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awakened." Then he calmly rebuilds the altar of Jehovah and lays the sacrifice and saturates it with

water, utters a few brief words of petition, and lightning falls and consumes the sacrifice. And then come the refreshing torrents of rain upon the parched earth.

I want you to think of the use which is here made of the supernatural. It is the setting and accompaniment of a mighty but typical conflict. A pure religion and pure ethics are at stake. It is the issue between the high and the low, the pure and the base, truth and falsehood. The *occasion* is *worthy* the *means*.

As you listen to the oratorio of Elijah—a greater musical conception in its unity, dignity, tragic power, and the force of interpretation than even the "Messiah"—you find yourself at its close in a temper of mind to exclaim, "It must have been so. If there was no such setting of fire and tempest, of defeat and of victory, there ought to have been. It is worthy."

The *supernatural* is used to the *worthiest ends*.

Indeed, must we not say that, so far as we can see, no other means could have been so efficient or sufficiently efficient. Miracles are *signs*. And they uniformly in Bible use signify the supremacy of Spirit,

the truth of religion, the fact of personality, the reality of God and of the soul. Throughout the Bible records we are left always in the presence of the sublime conviction that "God and the soul stand sure."

Dogmatic Negation.—Matthew Arnold begins his discussion of miracles by the statement that "miracles do not happen," and then asks how much evidence it would take to make us believe that a centaur was seen trotting down Regent Street. As if there were any conceivable significance to a centaur trotting down Regent Street as compared with Biblical miracles. The closure of mind to the deeper significance of the truth to which the supernatural has often borne most telling witness by the dogmatism of negation, which starts out by saying, what can not be is one of the most singular and most serious phases of modern speculative thinking. It is hopelessly skeptical, not merely of the supernatural witness to the deeper truths of the spirit and of freedom, but of those deeper truths themselves.

Of course it is easy to retort that

Matthew Arnold does not know everything, and that his personal experience is not universal or even typically so, and that it is immodest for him to assume to know what can and what can not happen.

"This question, whether God can work miracles, seriously treated, would be impious if it were not absurd," said Rousseau, "and it would be doing too much honor to him who would answer in the negative to punish him; it would be sufficient to keep him in custody."

Miracle and the Reign of Law.—But the difficulty lies deeper. What Matthew Arnold really means is something to which most of us would subscribe with profound respect, namely, that Nature is rational and orderly and that freaks do not occur contrary to the established laws of Nature. The physicist feels this profound confidence in the order of Nature, the reign of law. The chemist and the biologist pursue their extremely interesting researches into the still unknown with absolute confidence in the reliability of Nature. This is the *sine qua non* of research. This is sanity.

And we have a right to ask whether it

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is *reasonable* or probable that this rational order ever is or ever has been broken or suspended or changed for moral or religious reasons. The answer to this question will depend largely upon the relative importance attached to spiritual ends. Is it conceivably worth while, if such means should appear most effective, to suspend or change the natural order that telling emphasis might be put upon spiritual freedom? If we conceive that men emerge into their spiritual birthright as sons of God, not by involuntary and effortless evolution, but by such labor of spirit and such mighty conquests as make all lesser struggles seem trivial; by age-long effort, full of tragedy and pathos, but never ceasing, *then* it may appear rational that the whole creation should travel and groan together for the redemption of the sons of God. An appreciative estimate of the supernatural does not rest upon childishness, but ultimately upon the sublimest conceptions of human progress.

Doctor Gordon, in his "Religion and Miracle," just published, has taken the ground that religion, and in particular the Christian religion, is independent of mir-

acle. That, though miracles should all be explained away, the essential things in Christian faith would still remain; that in no important sense is spiritual truth, or the truth of the soul's relationship with God, which is the essence of religion, really dependent upon physical phenomena of the supernatural. He reckons himself free from any bondage of fear or concern as to the final estimate of miracle.

While there is a valuable assertion in this attitude of the essentially spiritual character of religion, it seems to me to go needlessly far in cheapening the estimate which we may and should have of the utility of the supernatural in aiding to bring about the very spiritual emancipation which Doctor Gordon so justly prizes. In a series of lectures upon the general subject, "What is Christianity?" Professor Adolph Harnack has said:

"While we are convinced that what takes place or happens in space and time is subject to the general laws 'of nature,' the religious man—if religion really permeates him and is something more than a belief in the religion of others—is certain that he is not shut up within a blind and brutal course of Nature, but that this course of Nature serves

higher ends, or, as it may be, that some inner and divine power can help us to so encounter it as that everything must necessarily be for the best. This experience, which I might express in one word as the ability to escape from the power and the service of transitory things, is always felt afresh to be a miracle each time that it occurs; it is inseparable from every higher religion and, were it to be surrendered, religion would be at an end."

CHRIST'S ASSERTION OF FREEDOM.—The assertion of spiritual freedom makes Christ the great emancipator, and never was that accent upon personality and freedom more needed and more welcome than at this hour. In the nineteenth century men put upon Herschel's tomb the words:

"He broke through the barriers of the heavens and added a universe to our knowledge."

Of Jesus, the twentieth century must say, as did the first:

"He brought life and immortality to light."

Jesus has taught us wherein freedom consists. It lies not only in superior excellence of intellect, in power of will, supremacy of character, but in spiritual consciousness of personality.

The crowning miracle of history is the Person of Christ. There stands His portrait in the Gospels, drawn with the simplicity, sincerity, and directness of artless men. No creation of imaginative genius is like that. And the evangelists were not geniuses. There is no touch of color here. All is transparent. The divine beauty of this picture is its own complete evidence.

Ruskin says that simplicity and calm characterize all that is great in art. And the deeds of power which Christ wrought, like the words which He spoke, have about them a simplicity and calm worthy the "Son of God." He stilled the tempest and raised the dead, and Himself rose from the grave. If we could see clearly and broadly enough, we should understand that such deeds were divinely appropriate expressions of His personality.

And what shall we say of the supernatural as used by Jesus Himself. Was there ever a more fitting use of means than the use Jesus made of the supernatural?

Christ's Use of Miracles.—We must feel His reserve. He would do no mighty

works in the presence of the unbelief of men merely to appease their curiosity; He would not lift His strength to shield Himself from any blow or to escape any suffering; He would not turn stones into bread to appease His own hunger; He would not push the bitter cup from His own lips in Gethsemane even though in exquisite agony He prayed that it might pass. Jesus used the supernatural much less in proportion to His life's activities than we ordinarily suppose.

But He did in acts of singular appropriateness and power accent the truth He taught by supernatural deeds that will forever cause that truth to stand distinct and singular.

Jesus was Himself the miracle of history. Have we not already come to the time when evolution itself leads to the logical necessity of the Son of God, the Perfect Man, God in the flesh?

Instead of shrinking from the loftiest and final manifestation of the supernatural in Jesus Christ, we may and we should rise rather to an appreciation of the appropriateness and the efficiency of the supernatural in Christ, and to the end

that men may be lifted forever to the dignity and freedom of sons of God.

Jesus raised the dead. Nothing less would be sufficient. He did not "dabble" and "trifle" with the supernatural! *He rose from the dead.* A Christ who did not and could not would not be a sufficient Christ for you or me. He brought life and immortality to light. No less a revelation would change the accent of the words spoken at all open graves, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust," and transform them from frozen clods of earth that bruise the broken heart of grief to a benediction that falls sweetly from the skies. With such a Christ as the New Testament gives us, in His integrity we can rest with assurance upon His own confidence in God when He bids His disciples "believe in God" and "believe in Me."

The spiritual enterprise of the ages is to get this accent and emphasis upon the fact of personality and the fact of freedom. And there is no place where this accent and this freedom can so certainly be found as by the side of Jesus Christ on the open mountain and in the crowded street. Hamilton Mabie says, "We can no more

get away from the books of power than we can get away from the stars." And we can not, if we would, get away from Jesus the Christ. "I, if I be lifted up," He said, "will draw all men unto Me." By the deepest law of the intellect man must turn to Him. For He demonstrates the unity of the world of experience; but a unity that at the same time satisfies a still deeper law, a unity with spiritual freedom. Philosophers, scientists, and little children alike and together can join hands and walk out with Him under the open skies and breathe the atmosphere of freedom. "Consider the lilies," "Behold the birds of the air." And yet His attitude is not merely that of complacency. He can and He does touch the leprous flesh and it becomes as the flesh of a little child. He can and He does tear away the tough curtains that have hidden eyes from the light of the day, and the blind see. And it is all the most appropriate and the most impressive in suggestion of His unique place in the main and central spiritual enterprise of the ages—the setting of men free, the putting of the

accent and emphasis upon the fact of personality, the supremacy of spirit.

NEED OF SPIRITUAL PSYCHOLOGY.—And how we need this Divine Champion of the Spirit now! We are but just emerging from a kind of nightmare of materialistic philosophy. In the name of exact science, even psychology, the science of the mind, of man's distinctive life, is most largely concerned with physiology. It is the brain and the nerves and the physiological phenomena that accompany mental processes of thought and will and emotion that are being studied and classified and interpreted, and especially as to their historical evolution from simpler and lower manifestations. Back of man the animal antecedent, and back of the animal the polyp, and back of the polyp star-dust and atoms. Psychology has its physiological laboratories. And there is the gravest danger that men lose the sense and the conviction of any reality save that which physical apparatus can test and prove. The time is ripe for a new and deeper and more adequate psychology than that now most in vogue, the psychology

that shall make some worthy account of the "psyche" or spirit.

I can not better close this necessarily fragmentary discussion of a vitally important question than by a word from Tennyson:

> "This main miracle that Thou art Thou,
> With power on Thine own act and on the world."